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THE SUCCESS OF PROHIBITION IN KANSAS¹

BY GOVERNOR E. W. HOCH.

A constitutional amendment was adopted in this state in 1880 prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors in this state except for medicinal, mechanical and scientific purposes. The battle for the supremacy of this law has been continuous since then. The liquor interests have contended against it in every possible way, but the law has constantly grown in favor and is now about as well enforced as any other penal statute.

I may say in general that it has been a great benefit to the state morally, educationally and financially. I question whether there are a similar number of people anywhere on earth relatively more prosperous than are the people of Kansas. We have more than \$100 per capita in our banks; nearly one-third of our counties are without paupers in their poor-houses or prisoners in their jails. We have the only state capital in the Union absolutely without a saloon. We have more than a quarter of a million young men and young women over twenty-one years of age who never saw a saloon. In short, we have a higher and better civilization than can be found in any state where the saloon is tolerated. One-half of our counties sent no prisoner to the penitentiary last year, and more than one-half of the prisoners in our penitentiary never lived in Kansas long enough to gain a residence in this state.

These may seem extravagant words, but I believe them to be literally true. The devil never invented a bigger lie than that the saloon is essential to the financial success of any community. We have proceeded for more than a quarter of a century in this state along two fundamental lines: First, that the logical attitude of government toward a recognized evil is that of prohibition, and that the liquor traffic is a recognized evil, we have contended, is attested by every license law, high or low, and has been affirmed and confirmed by the courts, from the lowest to the highest. We have insisted that if the liquor traffic is good it should be as free

¹This statement concerning the accomplishments of prohibition in Kansas was made in a letter from Governor Hoch to the Editor of THE ANNALS.

as the grocery business or the blacksmith business, but that if it is bad no department of government should be in partnership with it. Secondly, we have contended that a business which decreases the earning capacity of a large number, at least, of its patrons, cannot, in the nature of things, be a good thing financially for a community.

The nation is rapidly adopting these fundamental views of ours. Prohibition states and subdivisions of them now cover more than half the territory of the United States, and prohibition governs more than half the people, and our business views of the subject have become even more popular than our moral views of it. The business world is now a great temperance society. No railroad company wants a drinking employee; no merchant a drinking clerk; no one interested in a bank cares to have a drinking official, and the saloonkeeper himself would not ride comfortably on a railroad train if he knew that the engineer had a bottle of his liquor in his pocket. We confidently expect the Kansas idea to become universal.